Nutrition Education Approaches and Methods

California WIC Program
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Introduction

The chart that follows describes nutrition education approaches and methods used in the WIC setting. It consists of three parts:

1. **Group Education**

2. **Individual Education**

3. **Environmental Strategies**

Each of the three parts is divided into:

- **Approach and Description**
  This section gives the name commonly used for the approach and a brief description of the approach.

- **Benefits**
  This section lists some key benefits of the approach.

- **Limitations**
  This section lists some limitations of the approach.

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Nutrition Education Approaches/Methods
Group Education

Approach and Description	Benefits	Limitations
Child-Centered Approach This is an approach in which the focus is on the child as the learner. Examples include activities in which children learn together such as: • Listening to the reading of a nutrition picture book • Putting together a container garden • Singing songs about fruits and vegetables • Doing a food art project • Preparing a simple nutritious recipe	• Reduces the need for childcare as children are also engaged in the learning activity • Reduces potential distraction of parents/caretakers by children who are bored in adult-oriented classes • Staff model parenting skills and activities parents/caretakers can do at home with their children • Helps prepare children for school (especially develops reading-readiness skills) • Fun	• Does NOT always involve parents/ caretakers • Poses some difficulty in developing curriculum when children attending session are at different developmental stages

Nutrition Education Approaches/Methods
Group Education

Approach and Description	Benefits	Limitations
English as a Second Language (ESL) This is an approach in which participants' primary focus is to learn to speak, read, and write English while the topic learned is related to nutrition.	• Focuses on the immediate need of the participants • Participants develop language skills while learning nutrition-related information • Provides opportunity for interactive learning	• Designed for English language learners • Learners may have differing language skills
Facilitated Group Discussion (FGD) FGD is an interactive form of learner-centered group education where the learners discuss a specific topic and share their questions and knowledge with other group members. This allows WIC learners to gather information from each other in a supportive environment where their culture, prior experience, and personal concerns are acknowledged and respected.	• Focuses on the learners' needs • Establishes relationships between learners • Gives learners opportunity to learn from one another • Gives every learner opportunity to participate in the discussion	• Best for groups of 3-20 members • Requires a room where chairs can be arranged in a circle • Requires a topic that members are familiar with and have some experience in • Requires skill development of staff (to keep group on track, deal with misinformation, etc.) • Group may get "side-tracked"

Nutrition Education Approaches/Methods
Group Education

Approach and Description	Benefits	Limitations
Family-Centered Approach This is an approach in which the family (parents/caretakers and children) learn together. Examples include: • Reading a nutrition picture book • Putting together a container garden • Singing songs about fruits and vegetables • Doing a food art project • Preparing a simple nutritious recipe	• Helps parent and child bond • Reduces the need for childcare as children are also engaged in the learning activity • Reduces potential distraction of parents/caretakers by children who are bored in adult-oriented classes • Staff model parenting skills and activities parents/caretakers can do at home with their children • Helps prepare children for school (especially develops reading-readiness skills) • Fun	• Poses some difficulty in developing curriculum when children attending session are at different developmental stages

Nutrition Education Approaches/Methods
Group Education

Approach and Description	Benefits	Limitations
Guest Speaker This is an approach in which a person who has experience with a particular topic, such as a representative from a community agency, presents information.	• May personalize the topic • Provides another viewpoint • May break down stereotypical views • May provide exposure to community resources	• Guest may NOT be a good teacher • Learners may NOT relate to the speaker

Interactive Activities
This is an approach in which learners are engaged in various activities that engage them in the learning. Examples include:
   • Games
   • Writing recipes
   • Art projects
   • Writing lyrics to songs
   • Word puzzles
   • Storytelling
   • Dramatizations
	• Addresses multiple intelligences
	
	• Develops skills
	
	• Fun
		• Some learners may NOT feel comfortable interacting

Nutrition Education Approaches/Methods
Group Education

Approach and Description	Benefits	Limitations
Lecture This is an approach in which the educator presents information to participants usually with the participants as passive learners.	• Presents material in an organized fashion • Useful for large groups	• Focuses on the information the instructor believes to be relevant to the learners • Does NOT engage learners • Does not provide opportunity for learners to develop skills
Lecture with Discussion This is an approach in which participants are given the opportunity to ask questions and present feedback during or after the lecture.	• Presents material in an organized fashion • Useful for large groups • Gives some opportunity for learner to address their needs	• Often only a few learners have opportunity to participate in discussion • Usually does NOT give learners opportunity to learn from one another

Nutrition Education Approaches/Methods
Group Education

Approach and Description	Benefits	Limitations
Panel of Experts This is an approach in which several experts present information on a topic.	• Provides several viewpoints on a topic • May "hold" learners' attention through the diversity of viewpoints	• Experts may NOT be good teachers • Learners may NOT relate to the experts • Presentation may NOT be well organized • Limited opportunity for interaction • Does not provide opportunity for learners to develop skills

Nutrition Education Approaches/Methods
Group Education

Approach and Description	Benefits	Limitations
Role Play This is an approach in which two or more people act out a scene as though it was "real life". "Props" such as baby dolls or food models may be used.	• Introduces a problem situation in a dramatic way • Provides opportunity for learners to put themselves in others' shoes and thus experience another point of view • Explores a variety of approaches for solving a problem • Provides opportunity for practicing skills	• People may feel uncomfortable performing/"acting" • Difficult to use with large groups
Video Presentation This is an approach in which a video on the topic is presented for viewing.	• Limited preparation time required • Presents material in an organized fashion • May present information in an entertaining way	• Limited interaction for learners • Requires special equipment • Does not provide opportunity for learners to develop skills

Nutrition Education Approaches/Methods
Individual Education

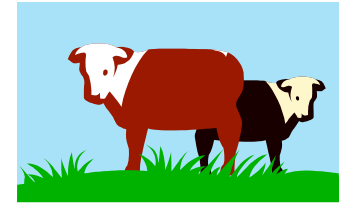| Approach and Description	Benefits	Limitations
Educator-Centered Counseling/Advising This is an approach in which the learner is given advice on what she/he needs to change.	• Presents information in an organized fashion • Provides guidance for behavior change	• Does NOT focus on the learner's needs • Defines the educator as the "expert"
Motivational Interviewing This is a learner-centered, counseling approach aimed at eliciting behavior change by helping the learner explore and resolve uncertainty.	• Focuses on the learner's needs • Uses the *Stages of Change* model for behavior change	• Requires time to establish rapport with learner • Most effective when interaction with learner is ongoing
Learner-Centered Education This is a counseling approach that focuses on the learners' needs and involves the learner in decision-making and problem solving.	• Focuses on the learner's needs • Often uses the *Stages of Change* model for behavior change	• Requires time to establish rapport with learner • Most effective when interaction with learner is ongoing

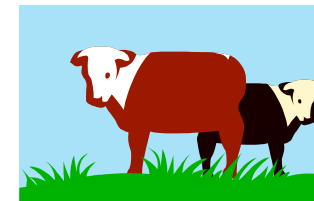# Nutrition Education Approaches/Methods
Individual Education

Approach and description	Benefits	Limitations
Self-Learning/Self-Study Modules This is an approach in which the learner independently at her/his pace goes through a learning module. This approach includes: • Computer-based modules (such as CD-ROMs) • Study guides • Workbooks	• Gives learner opportunity to pace the learning according to her needs • Gives learner opportunity to select what she/he wishes to learn	• Often requires good reading skills • Does NOT give learner opportunity to interact with others • Limited effectiveness for changing behaviors • May not check learner's understanding

Nutrition Education Approaches/Methods
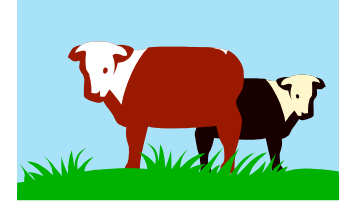## Environmental Strategies

Approach and Description	Benefits	Limitations
Bulletin Boards This is a strategy in which display boards, containing a variety of information, are posted. Bulletin boards may contain WIC-related information, such as: • WIC services • Community programs and resources • Nutrition information (such as "Five A Day")	• May reinforce messages given through other approaches • Means of providing information that some learners may feel uncomfortable discussing • Can be creative and fun • Makes use of waiting time	• Often requires good reading skills • Learner may not take the time to look at these • Need to be kept up-to-date • Needs to be changed frequently to "grab" learners' attention
Educational Materials Rounders/Racks This is a strategy in which educational materials such as pamphlets, recipes, and referral cards are displayed and made available to learners.	• Provides information in an easily accessible format • Means of providing information that some learners may feel uncomfortable discussing	• Most people do NOT learn best by reading information • Does NOT provide opportunity for interactive learning

Nutrition Education Approaches/Methods
Environmental Strategies

Approach and Description	Benefits	Limitations
Music This is a strategy in which music is played in waiting areas and during group education. Music may include: • Music for children during exercise/ movement activities, art projects, cooking, and games • Music for adults for physical activity/ movement • Music to set the "mood" for a topic	• Appeals to musical/rhythmic- oriented and kinesthetic-oriented learners • Fun • Adds variety to the learning experience	• Music may NOT appeal to all learners • Learners may have differing tastes in music
Posters This is a strategy in which paper placards, usually with graphics that provide information, are displayed on walls and doors.	• May reinforce messages given through other approaches • Can be posted in a variety of locations	• May require good reading skills • Provides a limited amount of information

Nutrition Education Approaches/Methods
Environmental Strategies

Approach and Description	Benefits	Limitations
Props This is a strategy in which items are made available to learners for easy viewing, and possibly handling. Props may include: • baby dolls • balls • beanbags • breastpumps • food models • jump ropes • WIC food packages	• Gives learners opportunity to see specific items to support the learning • Gives learners opportunity to use specific items to develop skills	• Displays may be costly (especially if they need to be replaced if items disappear) • Items may need to be monitored for safety
Waiting Room Videos This is a strategy in which a video is played for participants to view while they wait.	• Efficient use of time • May present information in an entertaining way	• Passive learning approach • Participant usually only views segments of the video